

KODIAK

National Wildlife Refuge

News

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It's that time of year again when we prepare for the annual magic of salmon returning to the rivers and streams of Kodiak Island. Brown bear are starting to stir and wake from their wintering dens in search of food. Birds have shifted gears from winter survival to nest searching. It is awe inspiring just flying over Kodiak with her peaks blanketed in winter snows, and to know that change is near.

Staff have also begun to shift gears and prepare for the short but busy field season. They have started sorting gear in preparation for field camps, are getting the floats back on the Beaver and have cleaned the decks on the Ursa Major II. Everyone is excited and prepared.

In this fast paced world, I hope we all take time to slow down and find a quiet time to reflect on the beauty and wonderment of the place we work, play and call our home.

*Best wishes for your summer season,
Mike Brady
Manager of Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge*

"It is an incalculable added pleasure to any one's sum of happiness if he or she grows to know, even slightly and imperfectly, how to read and enjoy the wonder-book of nature." -President Theodore Roosevelt





Kodiak Refuge Vision

Brown bear, fish, and other wildlife populations will continue to thrive on Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge in their natural diversity, living in pristine habitats. Refuge management will blend public and private partners in a dynamic alliance that fulfills the purposes and goals of Kodiak Refuge. The Refuge will provide a lasting legacy of resource stewardship for the use and enjoyment of current and future generations.

Kodiak Refuge Staff

Mike Brady - Manager
Tevis Underwood - Deputy Manager
Cinda Childers - Refuge Clerk
Bill Pyle - Supv. Wildlife Biologist
Bill Leacock - Wildlife Biologist
Robin Corcoran - Wildlife Biologist
Kevin VanHatten - Pilot/Biologist
Jeff Lewis - Vessel Operator
Darrell Fox - Maintenance
Hans Klausner - Supv. Park Ranger
Ava Kahn - Visitor Center Manager
Shelly Lawson - Education Specialist
Lisa Hupp - Outreach Specialist

HAPPY TRAILS *to Ed & Lecita Monzon*

Kodiak Refuge bids farewell this spring to Ed and Lecita Monzon, beloved members of our refuge family, as they embark on the new adventure of retirement. We will miss their many wonderful contributions and dedication to our public and to our staff.

As the Permit Technician for the Refuge, Lecita is well known for her exceptional customer service to the community, providing reliable, prompt, and well-organized efficiency and kind responsiveness. For Lecita, “customers” are, first and foremost, people. For her unfailing commitment to treating people well, Lecita won the Regional Director’s Customer Service award and has set a very high bar for customer service at the Refuge.

Lecita has also been of tireless service to our staff and volunteers, especially during the long and busy field season. Among her many duties, Lecita also coordinated the Refuge’s complex aircraft schedules, conducted flight following (sometimes late into the evenings), answered morning check-in calls from field camps (even on the weekends), and arranged the purchase and delivery of field camp groceries and critical supplies (toilet paper,

lost toothbrushes). Even during the craziest periods of the summer, Lecita responded to every request with grace; and she always found time to add a special treat to packages headed for the remote camps. For field-going staff and volunteers, she was mother, mailman and safety line – the calm eye-of-the-storm in a frenetic whirlwind of activity.

As custodian for our Kodiak facilities, Ed brought the highest level of orderliness and service. On multiple occasions, large events and high visitor use have made a mess of our buildings, but - like magic - they were spotless the following day. Ed took on extra cleaning duties with cheerfulness, and managed his schedule and supplies with independence and innovation. When a piece of equipment was not working properly, he investigated how to fix it or find the most reasonable replacement.

This winter, he took the initiative to steam-clean the carpets and chairs at the Visitor Center, and they haven’t looked so good in years. This is just one example of how much Ed did behind the scenes. We will miss Ed’s thoughtfulness, planning and carefull efforts.

We wish the best to the Monzons as they retire from a life of public service and set off to enjoy more time with their son and grandchildren. With gratitude and love, “happy trails” from Kodiak Refuge!



Birds & Art

Winter is a wonderful time to explore and practice art... and Kodiak students had several opportunities to learn more about local birds in the process. Did you know? 2018 is the “**Year of the Bird**” - the centennial of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act!

Celebrating Traditions

We partnered with the Sun’aq Tribe and local Alutiiq artist Coral Chernoff for 3 workshops celebrating Alutiiq culture and birds, including a presentation about traditional and modern uses, subsistence values, and a craft activity for students to practice bird identification.

Our first workshop was open to the public in Kodiak. In February and March, we traveled to Akhiok and Larsen Bay, where we had a lot of fun spending the day with elementary classes and learning about birds! Students painted beautiful designs, and wrote down ways they could help conserve birds for the future. Quyanaa to Coral and Kelly Krueger at Sun’aq for sharing their knowledge!



Jr. Duck Stamp Art Competition: Kodiak Wins Big!

Kodiak kids found wild success in this year’s Alaska Jr. Duck Stamp Contest!

Art and science curriculum combine in this annual national conservation education program for students in kindergarten through high school.

Kodiak students from Peterson Elementary and Ouzinkie won several prizes and honorable mentions for their beautiful bird art. Listen as a 3rd grade classroom learns about their results:

<http://kmxt.org/2018/04/kodiak-students-take-home-prizes-alaska-junior-duck-stamp-art-contest>

2018 winners and honorable mentions here: <https://www.fws.gov/alaska/jrduck/bestshow.htm>

Migratory Bird Calendar Contest: Larsen Bay Student’s Poster Wins at State!

This annual statewide contest engages youth in rural schools to share their perspectives of migratory bird conservation through art and literature.

We received 33 eligible entries from 4 Kodiak villages, and were delighted by the talented and thoughtful submissions!

Our 5 judge panel selected age group finalists to progress to the state competition in Anchorage.

Congratulations to the finalists and to 1st grader Anastasia Leach of Larsen Bay, whose poster was selected for the 2019 calendar!

Kodiak Finalists:

Anastasia Leach
Naomi Lewis
Ashlea Stone
Courtney Aga
Saelah Berns

Bradford Botz
Sophia Jones
Bradley Alexander
Jazmine White-Amodo
Teanna Amodo



Judges with the finalists’ submitted artwork.
The theme this year was “Birds Bouncing Back: Conservation Works!”

BY THE NUMBERS

*selections from our winter report to the
Kodiak Aleutian Regional Advisory Council*

Subsistence Permits Issued 2017-18:

(#) is reported harvest

Bear: 2 (0)

Deer: 66 (7)

Elk: 7 (1)

Fish: 55 (380)

Brown bear population composition average between 2013-17

*Based on systematic aerial surveys of six streams in southwestern Kodiak in July and August, **family groups in this area made up over 50% of the population** surveyed, comparable to similar levels observed between 1985- 2005. A change in composition occurred between 2008-12, when family groups dropped to only 28% of the population, likely because of reduced cub production and survival due to lower availability of sockeye salmon and berries during that period. We are currently investigating this pattern in cooperation with partners at ADF&G and Oregon State University.*

Report FULL TEXT:

https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Kodiak/what_we_do/resource_management/reports.html

Berry Monitoring

12 sites and 27 plots monitored for timing and abundance of berries important to brown bear. Elderberry began flowering on **June 11** at Karluk Lake - **3 weeks later than 2016**. Elderberry, salmonberry, and blueberry all had low productivity, potentially from prolonged cold temperatures and minimal snow cover. Elderberry stands were significantly overbrowsed by deer.

Sitka Black-tailed Deer

Significant winter mortality of deer observed in western and northern Kodiak Island during winter 2016-17. Hunters in fall of 2017 also reported observing fewer deer. Eastern and southern areas appeared to have less winter mortality.

Roosevelt Elk

Population estimates of elk on Afognak Island (ADF&G radio-collar survey) includes the Waterfall Herd, which summers in the vicinity of Refuge lands: 120 elk, of which 6 were harvested in 2017.

Mountain Goat

*2017 cooperative surveys with ADF&G surveyed 90% of known range:
2,595 adults / 659 kids
Permits issued by ADF&G:
249 drawing / 95 harvested
1484 registration / 166 harvested
as of January 8, 2018

Seabird Colonies

*Surveyed **150 out of 180 colonies** on the Kodiak Archipelago
134,000 birds counted
Species abundance and productivity information will be shared when analysis is complete.*

More ONLINE!

https://www.fws.gov/refuge/kodiak/what_we_do/science

Subsistence Migratory Bird Harvest for Kodiak

Seabirds: April 2-June 30 & July 31-August 31

All other birds: April 2-June 20 & July 22-August 31

We have updated our website with some helpful fact sheets:

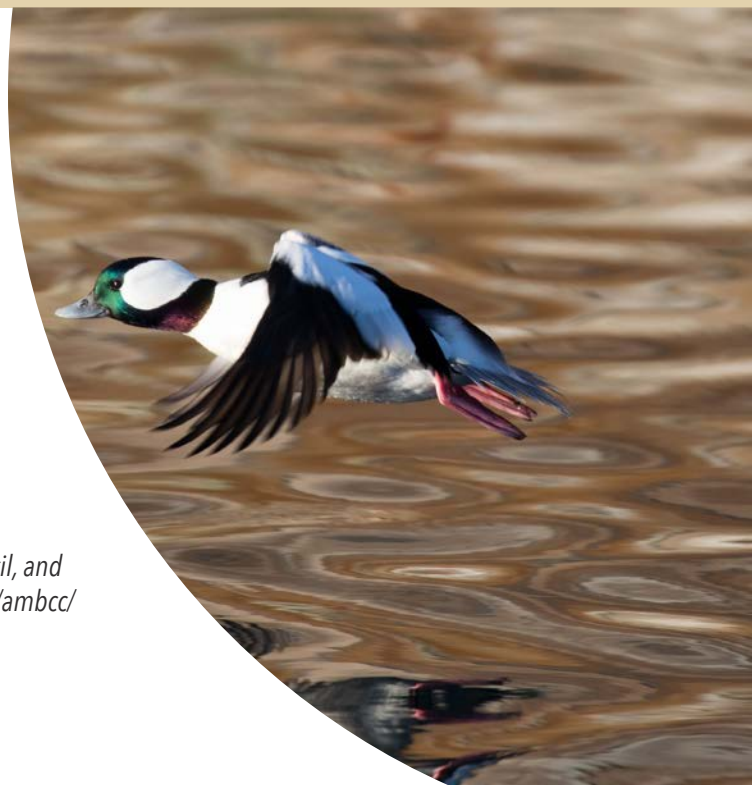
https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Kodiak/visit/rules_and_regulations/migbird.html

Know before you go!

- Eligibility
- License
- Means and methods*
- Restricted areas
- Restricted species

**No lead shot may be used. Lead can be toxic to wildlife & people.
Possession of lead shot carries a fine of \$250.*

Regulations are set through the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council, and an annual regulations pamphlet can be found at: <https://www.fws.gov/alaska/ambcc/Regulations.htm>



Kodiak Youth Present at the Alaska Forum on the Environment!

This February, three Kodiak High School students presented to an enthusiastic audience at the annual Alaska Forum on the Environment (AFE).

Hannah Villaroya, Keegan Ryder, and Leif King all served as crew members on the 2017 Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge Youth Conservation Corp (YCC). They shared summer experiences working with the Refuge, and presented about their leadership role in a variety of projects.

The Kodiak Refuge YCC program is a service learning program for students: as they learn, they are actively engaged in efforts to either teach others what they have learned and/or to make improvements on environmental issues or needs within public lands.

As many as 1,800 people attended the state-wide gathering of environmental professionals and leaders. In addition to presenting at the Forum, the teens staffed the youth-track booth and collaborated with other youth involved in environmental projects around the state.



Concerned for Terns: Biologists Meet About Monitoring Aleutian Terns in Alaska

Legendary long distance travelers, both Arctic and Aleutian terns find a summer home along the coast of the Kodiak Archipelago. They float in from exotic southern seas and form nesting colonies in beach grass and meadows, raising their chicks on small fish and fending off predators. For Aleutian terns, the bays and islets of Kodiak are part of an important chain of coastal habitat that stretches from southeast Alaska to eastern Siberia, the only place in the world where they breed. A precipitous decline in their population – over 90 percent in three decades – has prompted concerned scientists to look for clues and study the potential for restoration at colony sites across Alaska.

Kodiak Refuge has a long history of monitoring Arctic and Aleutian tern colonies on the Archipelago, beginning with population data collected nearly fifty years ago and surveyed intermittently since. In 2016, Robin Corcoran, avian biologist, and Jill Tengeres, bio-technician, began a multi-year project to study Aleutian

tern nests using remote game cameras. In addition to nest monitoring, they continue archipelago-wide population surveys of Arctic and Aleutian terns as part of a nearshore monitoring program in June and August of each summer.

This January, Robin and Jill brought preliminary results of their work to the statewide Alaska Marine Science Symposium, and Jill also presented in February to the Pacific Seabird Group. They created two posters to summarize the studies: Aleutian tern nest monitoring and population surveys conducted from 2016-17. They presented at a two-day Aleutian Tern Conservation Planning Meeting, and heard from other biologists who are currently studying the species. Several experts from outside of Alaska – statisticians and tern experts – joined the discussion to help coordinate and plan how to best monitor this imperiled bird across the state.

More: www.fws.gov/refuge/Kodiak/what_we_do/science/avian_research/terns.html



MAY at the Visitor Center...

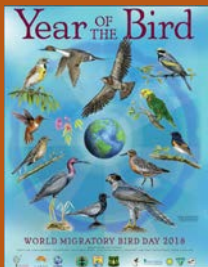
Cruise Ships:

May 4, 16, 22, 27, & 30

We look forward to greeting the first cruise ships of the year!

May 12: International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD)

Join us for a special event to celebrate birds! Build a bird feeder and enjoy a live bird presentation from the Alaska



Bird Treatment and Learning Center. Co-hosted with the Kodiak Audubon Society.

Closed for Seasonal Training During early to mid-May. Check our website and Facebook page for schedule updates.

We will be busy training our new crew of seasonal and local volunteers and staff - everything from Kodiak natural history to bear safety! Many thanks to our community partners who assist with orientations, presentations, and tours.

Join us for Summer Fun!

Summer weekly programs at the Visitor Center

Join our education and interpretation programs! Check our website and Facebook for updated program information.

- **Families Understanding Nature (FUN)** for toddlers and their families. Stories, arts, and activities around a new nature theme each week. Changing from Wed. to Tues. for the summer!
- **Wildlife Investigation Learning & Discovery (WILD)** for ages 6-12, investigating a different topic each week in the summer.
- **Happy Trails** for explorers of all ages in the summer, meeting at a different location around Kodiak each Saturday.



SALMON CAMP SCHEDULE

Session 1: June 4th-8th

Session 2: June 11th-15th

Session 3: June 25th-June 29th

Session 4: July 2nd-July 6th

Session 5: July 16th-20th

Session 6: July 23rd-July 27th

Session 7: August 6th-August 10th

Rural Communities Schedule

Tentative dates - community locations TBD

June 19th-20th

July 10th-11th

July 31st-Aug 1

*Questions about Salmon Camp?
Ask Shelly Lawson, Ed. Specialist:
michelle_lawson@fws.gov*

As Kodiak bruins begin to emerge from winter dens, we can all practice bear awareness to keep people and bears safe!

- Check around your home to minimize bear attractants. Secure garbage, use an electric fence around chicken coops and active smokehouses, bring pet food inside, clean outdoor grills.
- Prepare for possible bear encounters. Learn about bear behavior and local bear activity, rehearse a calm response to a possible encounter, and carry a deterrent that you know how to use.
- Avoid surprising bears. Make noise by talking or singing, travel in a group, stay aware of your surroundings, slow down and be extra alert in areas with low visibility and high noise, like brushy streambanks.

Keep a clean camp. Secure food and garbage in resistant containers or high in trees, use an electric fence around your camp.

- Give bears space. Never approach a bear, pay attention to behavior that indicates you are too close, slowly back away to increase distance.

Spring Bear Aware



Help stop the spread of invasive species!



photo: Orchi/Wikimedia

Orange hawkweed is Kodiak's most famous invasive plant. You can stop the spread of hawkweed by cleaning boots, clothing and equipment that has been in an infested area, and by not picking the flowers and transporting them to new locations.

Invasive species can spread aggressively, wiping out other important native flora and fauna. Kodiak Refuge works with partners to monitor and eradicate harmful invasives.

Common Invasives in Kodiak:

**orange hawkweed
oxeye daisy
canada thistle
signal crayfish**

Stop by the Visitor Center for invasive plant ID info.



Flying into the Refuge this summer? Be our eyes on the ground! Take a photo and some notes about location of plant, and report to:

Bill Pyle, Wildlife Biologist
bill_pyle@fws.gov
907-487-0228



Volunteer Training Schedule

Our training for seasonal volunteers and staff begins May 7th. Some training is open to local volunteers, including safety training that is required for participating in any field work with us.

Want to volunteer in the field?

We have two courses required for all field staff and volunteers:

Bear Safety

May 8th 8 am - 12 pm
(recertify every 3 years)

Aviation Safety (Water Ditching)

May 25th (afternoon classroom)
May 26th (morning in the pool)
(recertify every 2 years through webinar or attending classroom portion of course)

Optional Courses

Firearms Certification

May 8th afternoon (classroom)
May 9th / 10th (options for annual qualifying at Salome Range. Time TBA)

First Aid/CPR

May 11th 9 am - 4 pm

Motorboat Operation Certification

May 21st - 24th

Email: lisa_hupp@fws.gov for information or to sign up for a class.

Volunteer Opportunities

Find an opportunity to get involved!

Citizen Science: Monitoring Avian Productivity & Survivorship (MAPS)

The MAPS program will continue for it's 9th year! We've now banded almost 2000 landbirds! We mist net and band songbirds at the Buskin River State Recreation area six times each summer (roughly once every 10 days). We invite the public to come out and learn more about bird banding and we will train volunteers 15+ who can commit to attending most sessions. To join email notification list, contact: cindyhogan@gmail.com

Assist with seabird and tern colony monitoring

Day trips by skiff to survey colonies near Kodiak during the first week of June and first week of August, tentatively. Day trips during June to assist with tern colony monitoring along the road system and at remote sites by floatplane and inflatable kayak. Remote sites require safety training courses for fieldwork. Contact Robin Corcoran to inquire: robin_corcoran@fws.gov

Outreach, Education, & Interpretation

We recruit for Visitor Center docents year round - join us during seasonal training to learn the ropes and help with cruise ship visits during the summer!

Salmon Camp Aide with the Kodiak Refuge Youth Leadership (KRYL) program: open to ages 15-18 by application. Contact Shelly Lawson for more information: michelle_lawson@fws.gov

Field Operations Support

Cabin Steward Program: help us with light maintenance and cleaning at designated public use cabins. Contact Hans Klausner for more information: hansel_klausner@fws.gov

We occasionally seek local volunteers to assist with additional field projects as needed. See training requirements for field deployment.

FURTHER AFIELD:

Become a Friend and support all 16 of Alaska's National Wildlife Refuges

Alaska's Refuges need you! Join Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges and help refuges statewide with Invasive plant projects, science and culture camps, maintenance projects, and more.

Check out:

<https://alaskarefugefriends.org>
for updates and opportunities to get involved!

2018 volunteer projects include:

Dalton Highway Weed Pull
June 18-22 & July 23-27

Friends and other volunteers cooperate with Kanuti Refuge, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service and others to control white sweet clover and other invasive plants at sites where they could easily disperse into the Refuge. Control efforts have focused on manual pulling, but have also included mechanical and cultural control.



Tree Swallow Banding

June 17-30

Volunteer would travel to Bethel for 2 weeks and assist with banding Tree Swallows. Travel from Anchorage or Fairbanks, Food, Lodging, and Training would be provided by the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. Tree Swallows will be banded from approximately 50 boxes throughout Bethel.

PUBLIC USE CABINS

your gateway to the Refuge

Looking for a home base while you explore? Check out our public cabin system, with coastal and lake options from northern Afognak to southeastern Kodiak: https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Kodiak/visit/visitor_activities/public_use_cabins.html

NEW IN 2018:

We're excited to announce a brand new cabin will be under construction during the summer of 2018! A few years ago, our cabin at Little River on the Spiridon Peninsula met an untimely end as a result of improper oil stove use. We will replace the cabin this year with a new structure, based on the previous cabin's design.

Collaboration with several agencies makes this cabin project possible. The U.S. Coast Guard helped us bring in all of the materials to this remote location as part of a practice drill for their Kodiak Air Base crew. And this summer, we will

welcome a hotshot crew of cabin experts from the Glacier Ranger District of the US Forest Service. The crew will work on construction throughout the month of July as part of an inter-agency labor agreement.

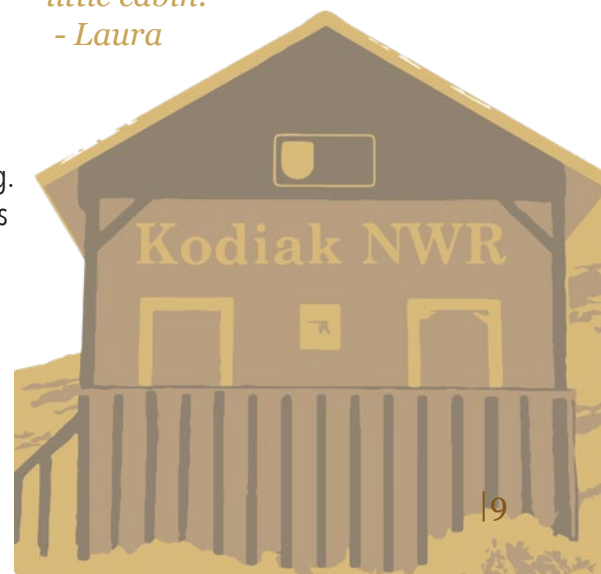
The cabin site is lake-side amid rolling hills and open tundra - an ideal location for hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing. We are currently exploring opportunities for this cabin to be part of a hut-to-hut trail system on the Peninsula.

Stay tuned for an announcement later this year on the availability of this new cabin for reservations!

"What a wonderful time we've have this week. We have caught so many fish, hiked over miles of river. We spotted a big bear down the river... A very beautiful place and peaceful.

The best part for me was to watch the kids fish and the looks on their faces each time they landed a big one. What a great little cabin!"

- Laura



Summer Field Plans

May is the start of our busy field season! Through monitoring and research, we can better understand the habitat and wildlife of Kodiak Refuge - and prepare for future changes and challenges. Here are some of our summer plans...

Avian Monitoring & Research

- We will be updating the North Pacific Seabird Colony database for the Kodiak Archipelago. Last summer we surveyed colonies around Kodiak Island, and in June and August 2018 we will survey approximately 150 seabird colonies around Afognak and Shuyak Islands.
- We will continue to work with collaborators studying the nesting ecology of Arctic and Aleutian terns, two species that have been declining in number in coastal Alaska for the past three decades. We will be testing a variety of protocols for accurately counting nesting terns, and will be collecting data on nest survival, reasons for nest loss and colony abandonment, prey delivered to chicks, and habitat measurements.
- Thanks to our dedicated local volunteers, we will again conduct the Breeding Bird Survey and the ninth year of our citizen science bird banding program (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship).

Habitat

- Following a successful pilot program, we have fully implemented annual monitoring of berry species important to brown bear at 12 different sites on Kodiak and Afognak Island. We use remote cameras and site visits to track phenology and productivity of elderberry, salmonberry, and blueberry shrubs.
- For a fourth year, we will coordinate a network of partners that monitor water temperature of salmon habitat in 25 lakes and 31 streams of the Kodiak Archipelago.
- We continue to work with partners on invasive plant management and monitoring, including orange hawkweed eradication on Camp Island and reed canarygrass in the Buskin River watershed.

Fisheries

We will continue to monitor sockeye salmon escapement on Akalura Creek using a remote video system. This project began as a pilot program in 2015.

Brown Bear Monitoring & Research

- Our annual cooperative Intensive Aerial Survey will cover the Sturgeon River basin and Spiridon Peninsula at the end of May.
- Remote cameras will help us quantify bear density and salmon catch rates by bears on Red Lake River, the Lower Falls of Dog Salmon, and on the Karluk Lake shoals. This data will be incorporated into a predictive model for varying escapement, climate, and land use scenarios
- We'll conduct annual Brown Bear Stream Surveys in southwest Kodiak to measure bear attendance and composition along a suite of salmon streams
- We will set up a remote wildlife camera array along the O'Malley River to gather baseline data on bear occupancy.

Aerial

Our pilot biologist will stay busy this summer with aerial biology surveys for bear and mountain goat, and welcomes some additional help from other Alaska Refuge pilots during peak survey periods.

Ursa Major II

Captain Jeff Lewis and Refuge staff will be at sea during June and August for seabird surveys around Afognak and Shuyak Islands. They will call at coastal public use cabins in the spring and permitted setnet sites in July. You may also see them in the Alitak area for hunting season patrols.



Photo courtesy of Jeff Jones